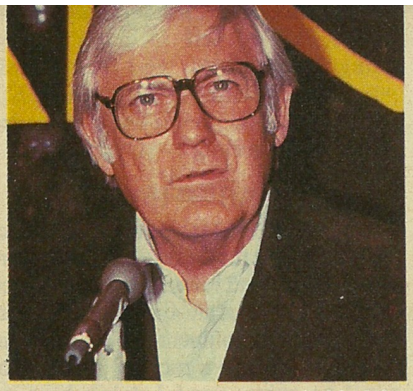


PHOTO: ALAN BRENDER

Director Robert Wise, the man behind the helm of the *Enterprise*'s first voyage across the movie screen.

ALL-NEW

Robert Wise

"A Very Sloppy Way to Make a Movie"

The Oscar-winning director examines the first screen voyage of the *U.S.S. Enterprise*, commenting, just a few months after its release, on "Star Trek: The Motion Picture."

BY RANDY & JEAN-MARC LOFFICIER

Certainly to fans of science fiction, Robert Wise is a familiar presence. From his directorial debut in 1944 with The Curse of the Cat People *to 1979's* Star Trek: The Motion Picture, *Wise has made more than his share of genre films.*

His film career began in 1933 as an assistant editor. Wise eventually became a full-fledged editor, sharing credit with William Hamilton on two 1939 films, The Story of Vernon & Irene Castle *and* The Hunchback of Notre Dame *(the Charles Laughton version). Then, in the early 1940s, he became prominent as sole editor on many films, including Orson Welles' master work,* Citizen Kane *(1941).*

When director Gunther von Fritsch was unable to meet the production schedule on Val Lewton's Curse of the Cat People, *Wise got his first chance to direct. Although he only took 10 days to complete the film, it emerged as a taut, psychological thriller. In 1945, Lewton again gave filming reins to Wise, who created the classic,* The Body Snatchers *(with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi).*

Wise went on to delight and chill SF audiences with The Day the Earth Stood Still *(1951),* The Haunting *(1963),* The Andromeda Strain *(1971), and* Audrey Rose *(1977). This emphasis on science fiction and horror certainly doesn't negate the director's sustantial contributions to non-genre films, where he was responsible for pictures such as* Run Silent, Run Deep *(1958),* Two for the Seesaw *(1962), and* The Sand Pebbles *(1966). Wise earned Oscars as Best Director for both* West Side Story *(co-directed with Jerome Robbins, 1961) and* The Sound of Music *(1965).*

In 1977, Wise joined the Star Trek *film project—once intended to be a TV revival—with a number of elements already in place. A firm release date, special FX problems and the burden of filming without a complete script almost crippled* Star Trek: The Motion Picture.

In 1980, a few months after *the release of the 1979 film, Wise took some time to chat candidly about his experiences making the first* Trek *to the silver screen. His remarks then are fascinating now—five years later—and especially prophetic about the cinematic future of* Star Trek.

STARLOG: You must have been asked these questions a hundred times.

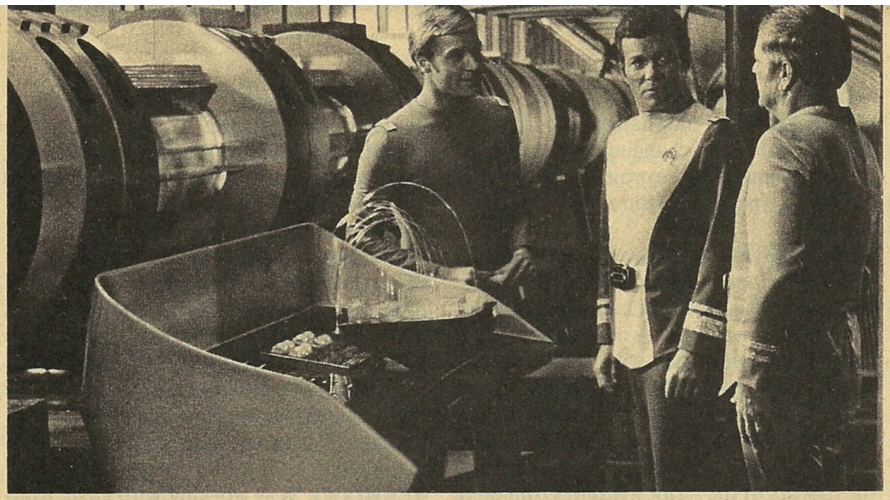
ROBERT WISE: All the time. And I'll be asked the same questions a lot more.

STARLOG: Why *Star Trek*?

WISE: I thought it was time. I have always been intrigued by science fiction, even though I have only done the two genre films, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *The Andromeda Strain*. And I thought it was time that I did a science-fiction picture that took place in space! Both of my other ones were Earth-bound. In *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, we had a visitor from outer space, coming in a spaceship. That really intrigued me more than anything else. So, I was glad to have a chance to explore this area further. I liked the idea of doing *Star Trek* from the beginning because of my fascination and desire to do a film which dealt with the experience of being in space.

STARLOG: Were you familiar with the *Star Trek* universe before you began the film?

WISE: Frankly, no, I wasn't. Of course, I knew of it, but I had not become a "Trekkie" when the TV series first aired. I had only seen one or two segments which I thought were all right, but I didn't get hooked on it! After the president of Paramount Pictures asked me if I would be interested in directing the movie, I said, 'Well, I just don't know, I'll have to



Robert Wise's contributions to the motion picture included the casting of Stephen Collins as Decker and the rebuilding of the superstructure to the Engine Room set.

STARLOG: Speaking about people, is it true that you were instrumental in getting Leonard Nimoy to reprise his role as Spock?

WISE: It is an interesting story. I was not very familiar with the show when I started and Spock did not mean anything special to me. I knew there was a character named Spock, but the fact he wouldn't be in the film meant *nothing* to me at the time. But after my wife, her daughter and my son-in-law read the script, they said to me: "It's impossible, you don't have Spock, you *cannot* do *Star Trek* without Spock!" And they were *Trek* fans, so I respected their opinions. I went back to the studio, and said, "We need Spock, otherwise the whole thing won't work." And at the time, Leonard had other commitments and I don't think he really wanted to do it. In fact, he had not been written into the script. There was only one other Vulcan, a young guy named Sonak. Anyway, Paramount and Leonard must have finally reached an agreement on a figure, because he asked to see the script, so we sent it to him, warning him that his character was not in it, but could be written in this way and that way. And that's how we got him back and I'm really the one who made it a condition.

STARLOG: Nimoy gives Spock some emotions in this movie. Was that part of Roddenberry's ideas or was it Nimoy's?

WISE: No, I think it was Leonard's. He wanted to give the character more depth. You know, characters are not static, they change, they evolve. Leonard was very conscious of this and just didn't want to simply repeat his role in the same way as the TV version.

STARLOG: How was it to work with actors who had a better knowledge of their characters and, indeed, of the film than you did?

WISE: I should tell you a story first: after Paramount finally signed everybody, they had a big publicity party for the press, and they set up a large table with Roddenberry and all the cast. When my turn came to speak, I said, "You know, I'm the alien here!" because I was the only one who hardly knew anything about *Star Trek*. They all knew more than I did. But it worked very well. They're all very good actors, very professional. There were some very pleasant moments with all the actors on the set because I found that they really loved their characters and always looked for ways of improving their roles, like "so-and-so wouldn't say it like that," but at the same time, they were never pushy, or overly tempted to be demanding, to take over the whole thing. I found all of them, and particularly Bill [Shatner] and Leonard, to be very good, professional actors, and of course, the fact that they knew and loved their characters was a great help.

STARLOG: There were some reports of problems between Shatner and Nimoy.

WISE: I think the whole thing was quite exaggerated! I saw no evidence of this on the set. Of course, they are actors, so you would expect some problems now and then, but there was nothing undue, and as a matter of fact, we had a big session in my office after the first few days to talk about the script material coming up and they were very helpful, indicating the way their characters were more likely to act. They expressed their opinions quite openly and honestly and I wasn't aware of anything those reports indicated.

STARLOG: Your two other SF films, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *The Andromeda Strain*, relied far less heavily than *Trek* on special effects. How was it to work on a film with so many FX?

WISE: It was quite different. You're right to say that the two other movies were different in that aspect. They had many effects, too, but they were fairly simplistic ones compared to *Trek*'s

STARLOG: It's all a matter of control, isn't it?

WISE: Yes, control was much simpler then. In *Star Trek*, all of the FX were very elaborate. And it was very, very difficult because I had so much to deal with which was not even done yet. Scenes in which my actor had to play and react to that blue screen, and I had nothing to show them on the screen. All that came in months and months later. The best I ever had for the actors to react to was a projection of a sketch or a picture of what the FX men were planning to achieve. That's all I had. It takes some highly professional actors to respond to something like that—in fact, it was perhaps the film's most difficult part. And then, of course, we had the big problem of having to change the special effects people after a year.

STARLOG: Would you care to further explain that change from one team to another?

WISE: Well, I don't like to dig in too much into this subject, but I simply want to say that they were very creative people and they had excellent ideas. The big concern that we had was whether they would be able to execute all the effects in time so that the film would be ready for its release date of December 7, which was *absolutely imperative*. That concern was what made us decide to change, it wasn't lack of creativity or abilities or anything like that. They were very good and had very good ideas, but I don't think they were equipped yet to execute such a large amount of very sophisticated effects quickly enough. *Star Trek* was a giant picture in terms of FX and work involved.

STARLOG: How were your relations with Doug Trumbull, John Dykstra and the new FX team?

WISE: Very good. I worked with Doug before on *The Andromeda Strain*. I had never met Dykstra before, but we worked together well. I had to work with both of them and they had to work with each other. Doug was particularly overseeing the whole job. It was a constant matter of meetings, studying the sketches, storyboards and ideas, and reacting to them. "I like this" or "I don't like that" or "We'll do this" and "Do you think we could do that better," etc. It required constant exchanges and interchanges between all of us.

STARLOG: If not for the December deadline, do you think that some of the effects would have been improved?

WISE: Oh, I think so and I also think that both Doug and John would admit that. I don't want to imply that I think they did less than a fantastic job. Doug, John and their people did a fantastic amount of excellent work to get the picture ready by that date, especially considering the fact they had started behind schedule, and I can't give them enough credit or praise for the job they did. However, given more time, let's say another three to six months, I think they would both agree that there are areas which could have been improved, or done slightly differently.

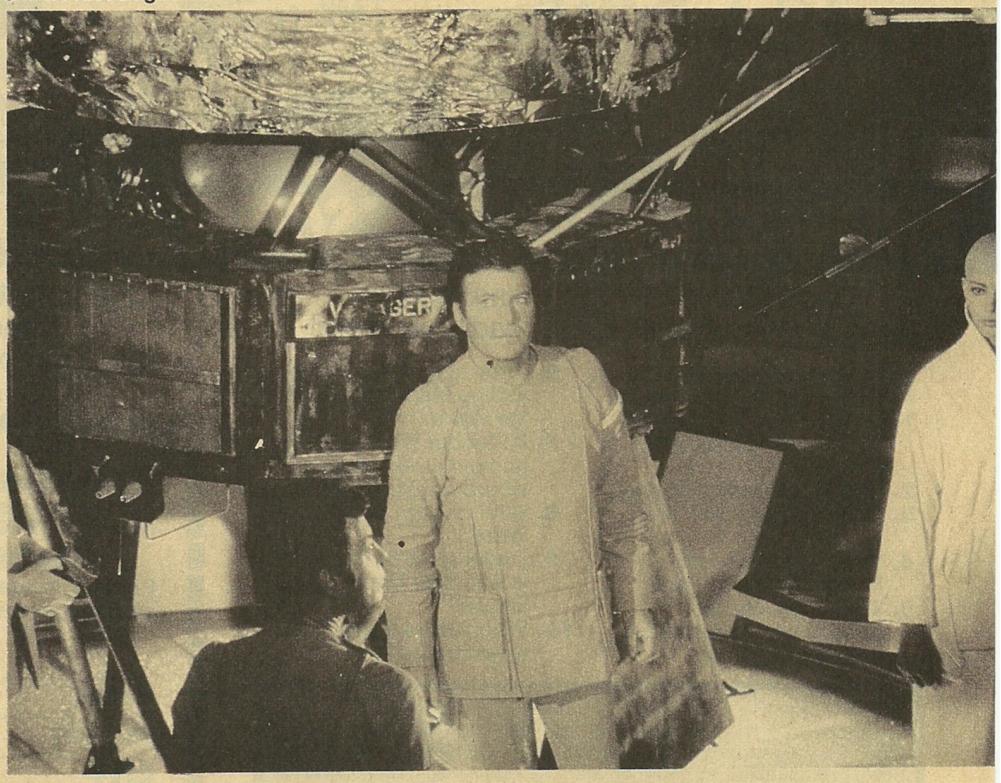
STARLOG: Some fans feel that in the TV series, interchanges between the characters are the main source of appeal, whereas in the movie, there's an over-emphasis on effects and not enough on actors. Would you care to comment on this criticism?

WISE: I have to say that it wasn't as if somebody had sat down at the beginning and said, "Listen, we want to get a lot more special effects." It was *not* a deliberate move to shift the emphasis from one area to another. That was really because of the script, the story we had to tell. We didn't try to put more special effects in it. I didn't try, none of us tried. We had people reacting to things that were happening on the screen, so we had to show these things. So, if there is a valid criticism coming from those *Trek* fans who really love these characters with all their hearts, there still wasn't anything we could do about it. We would have needed a totally different story.

STARLOG: Did you feel a lot of pressure

from Trekkers during the shooting?
WISE: Not unduly. There were many letters, of course. I had an experience I found quite interesting. Before I started shooting, we had that press conference, and after that, I got about 20 letters from all over the country from fans, and they were split 50-50 between those who said, "Don't you dare touch a thing! Don't fool around, just do *Star Trek* as it was and don't mess with it," and those who said, "Thank goodness, now it can be done the way it should be done, *and* improved." With the letters running 50-50, we knew when we began that we had a situation where we could *not* please everybody. As far as the actual shooting was concerned, I don't think we had any particularly undue pressure.
STARLOG: Now [1980], with the movie out for a few months, are the letters still 50-50?
WISE: I haven't had too many letters yet—nor the time to read them all. But I would say that it's more like 60 pros and 40 against.
STARLOG: Going back to the actual shooting, were there any specific problems or incidents?
WISE: Nothing special—except the last set, down into *V'Ger*, was a bit dangerous to be in. All those hexagons were plastic and we had to be extremely careful when we walked around. We had electricians falling through; it was a little bit scary at times! A prop man fell and had to be pulled up. We even had a scoreboard indicating who went through the most—electricians, grips, special effects. I don't know who won.
STARLOG: And the actors?
WISE: Oh, I think they enjoyed it, too! We had a lot of laughs during the shooting. Bill Shatner is very funny, he has a very quick wit, puns and jokes, and he would always come up with a good laugh!
STARLOG: The film's final cut is two hours, 10 minutes. Did you cut out a lot?
WISE: We cut quite a bit, yes. I would think that, overall, we cut about half-an-hour out of it. Mostly some sequences that seemed to play on and on, bits and pieces here and there.
STARLOG: Don't you think that the present cut is also a bit long at times?
WISE: Sure do!
STARLOG: There's the scene when Kirk is being taken by Scotty around the *Enterprise* in that spacepod shuttle.
WISE: That is one minute and 30 seconds long, and the flight inside *V'Ger* is also about two minutes too long.
STARLOG: So, why didn't you cut them and make those scenes shorter?
WISE: *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* is the *first* film that I've done where I didn't have a sneak preview because of the rush caused by the deadline. They didn't have time for it. Normally, we would see a picture and go back and have time to work on it a little bit more. But we didn't have *any* time: I saw it all completely together on Monday before it opened in Washington on Thursday! One of the reservations I have about the film is that I didn't have the time to fine tune it. I think we could have trimmed it by six-and-a-half minutes—*at least*! I was planning to do some more cuts on the version which would be released overseas, but I found out later that Paramount had already made 150 prints, so it would have been too costly to go back and re-edit it. It would have cost a quarter of a million dollars to do it!
STARLOG: Are you aware of some of the negative reviews for *Trek*? Some people thought the acting was not very good.
WISE: I haven't read all the reviews—far from it—but I would disagree with that comment. I think the performances were no worse than the TV show's and often better. I don't understand and don't agree with that. Shatner and Nimoy in particular were excellent actors. I think many people were disappointed with the movie because they were expecting another kind of film. More like a *Star Wars* action film whereas, in fact, this is not *Star Trek* at all! We had very little action in the script.
STARLOG: What's going to be the future of *Trek*?
WISE: I am sure they have something in mind because they kept all the key sets stored on Stage 9, but whether they will go ahead and make another movie, I don't know. I'm sure it will depend on how well this movie ultimately does. But if they do go ahead in a year or two and do another one, I hope, in fact, I am *sure* that they will have a complete story and script *before* they get into it. I think they now understand the necessity of getting a script beforehand on which everybody agrees, getting it right, getting everything budgeted right, worked out in advance.
STARLOG: Will future *Star Treks* change the characters?
WISE: I would think so. They cannot go on forever with these same poor people playing it indefinitely! But it's not my decision.
STARLOG: Would you consider directing a second movie?
WISE: I don't believe so! I think having done it, once is quite enough. I wouldn't be ready to say, "I'll never do it again"—very dangerous, you know—but I think it's quite unlikely. I would rather do other kinds of films now.
STARLOG: What kinds?
WISE: Smaller, more intimate, less physical. I'm not saying I'll never do another space opera, but not before a good couple of years go by.
STARLOG: Would you like to do another pure fantasy like *The Haunting* or *Audrey Rose*?
WISE: I would love it, love it! I love doing that kind of film—*if* I could find the right story!
STARLOG: A final difficult question: do you honestly *like Star Trek: The Motion Picture*? Compared to your other SF movies?
WISE: I don't know, it's awfully hard to answer. Often, we directors generally like our latest film the best, so I like it. I don't think *Star Trek* is everything I hoped it would be and certainly I had no idea it was going to cost the tremendous amount of money it cost [$44 million]. None of us did. I am sure Paramount would not have gotten into it had they realized, at the beginning, it was going to cost that much. I believe they're going to come out ahead on it. They are *not* going to lose money. But for me, for sheer content and story and characters and what the film had to say, and what it was about, I still prefer *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. ★

Director Wise was unfamiliar with *STMP*'s resemblance to the *Star Trek* episode "The Changeling," despite the similarity between Kirk's confrontation with *V'ger* here and the one he faced against Nomad on the TV series.



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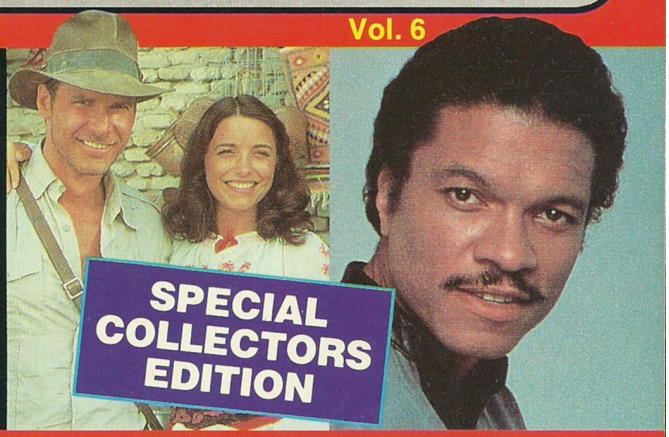
"Maybe this time I'll get to kill Mel!"



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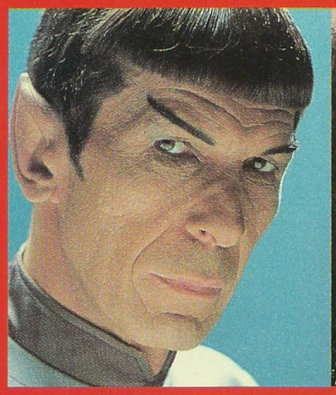

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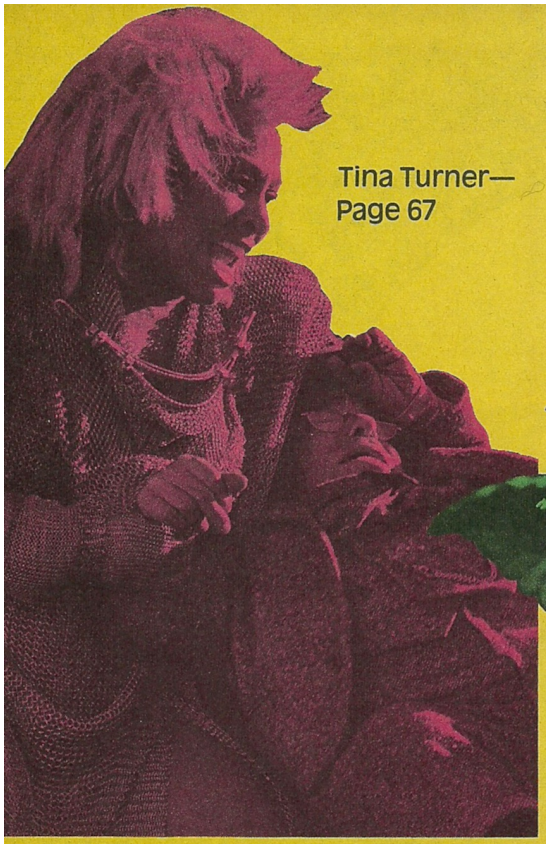

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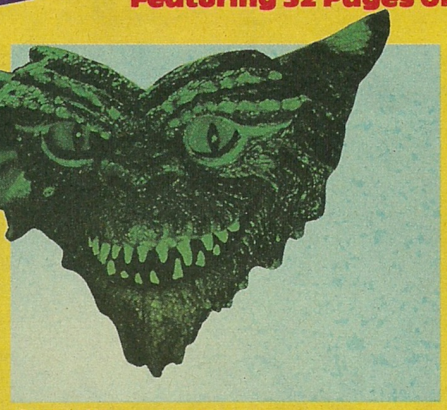

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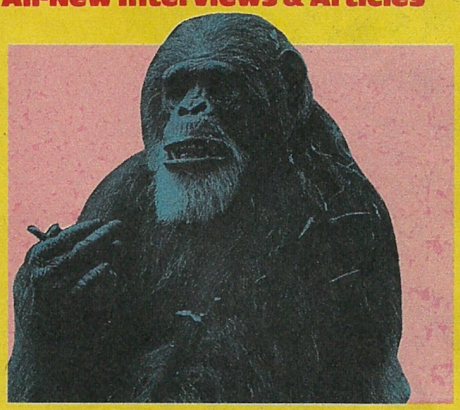

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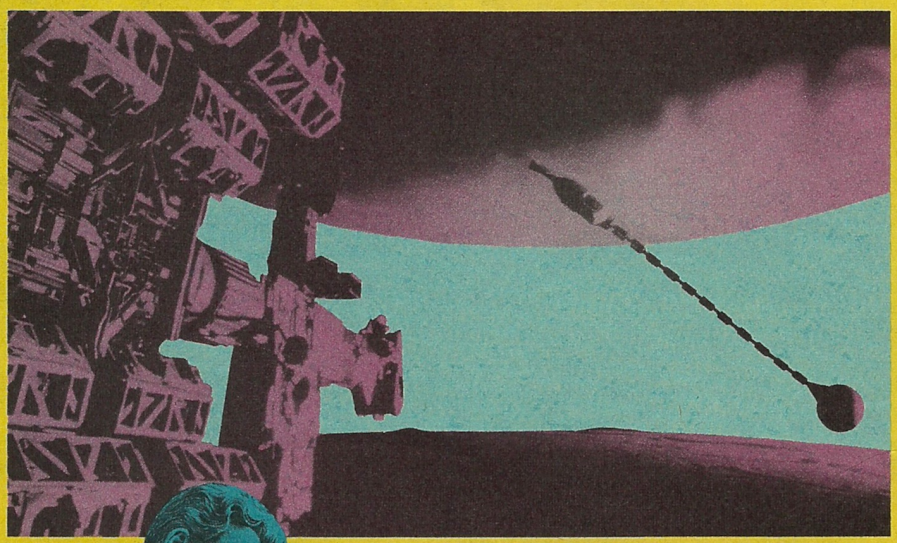

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LINER NOTES

Welcome to THE BEST. Once again, as in previous years, we've selected some of the finest articles published in STARLOG, the science-fiction media magazine, for this selection of THE BEST OF STARLOG.

And just what makes up THE BEST? In-depth interviews with Karen Allen, Tina Turner, Billy Dee Williams, Frank Oz. Thoughts on movies from filmmaker John Sayles, *Ghostbusters* director Ivan Reitman, *Gremlins* scribe Chris Columbus, *ALIEN* writer Dan O'Bannon. The making of *The Terminator*. Profiles of two Doctors Who, Patrick Troughton and Jon Pertwee. Chats with two "*V*" veterans, Jane Badler and Michael Ironside. Talks with young actors Matthew Broderick and Merritt Butrick. And the *last* interview—conducted not long before his death—with a legend in science fiction, Buster Crabbe.

For this sixth volume, we've added to THE BEST. We're including 32 pages of *all-new* material, articles we lacked the space to publish previously. In effect, there's a whole new *half-an-issue* of STARLOG here, filled with fascinating revelations and candid comments.

The new material begins with some views of several science-fiction fiascos. First, there's an extensive interview with director Robert Wise, conducted by veteran STARLOG correspondents Randy and Jean-Marc Lofficier in 1980 just a few months after the release of Wise's *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. At the time, Wise termed that cinematic experience as "a very sloppy way to make a movie"—a phrase echoed by moviegoers in general and *Trek* fans in particular. Now, five years and two *Treks* later, Wise's comments are quite thought-provoking and terribly prophetic. (By the way, this interview, done for the French fantasy magazine *L'Ecran Fantastique*, has never before been published in English, much less in America).

Just a few weeks before the premiere of *Return of the Jedi* in 1983, *Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone*, much-ballyhooed as a 3-D space spectacular, was unleashed to theaters. Despite its startling scenery and the presence of accomplished actors Peter Strauss, Molly Ringwald, Michael Ironside, Andrea Marcovicci and Ernie Hudson, it was *not* a success.

In an interview several months later, director Lamont Johnson told senior STARLOG correspondent Steve Swires why. His explanation began with one simple statement: "I *never* should have made that movie." This candid chat—ranging from Johnson's blacklisting to his days as a radio Tarzan to his directorial work for *The Twilight Zone*—has remained in our files due to its length. It's one of the finest articles we've never published—until now.

A pair of more recent interviews complete these delvings into disappointments. Producer Neil Canton lets West Coast correspondent Lee Goldberg know "what went wrong with *Buckaroo Banzai*" on its journey from eagerly-awaited film to box-office bomb. Canton (who recently produced *Back to the Future*) details *Buckaroo's* emerging status as a cult classic, videocassette hit and fan favorite. Could there be a sequel? Maybe—and as a *Banzai* fan, I hope so.

Finally, STARLOG Special FX Editor David Hutchison quizzes stuntwoman Paula Crist on her ordeal, acting inside the belly of the beast to bring to life Disney's dinosaur, *Baby*. The movie, quite frankly, wasn't very good, but Crist's memories of playing this prehistoric pet are dramatic: it was both a delight, she says, and torture.

In the way of other new material, there's Hutchison's in-depth examination of the special FX of *2010* (another article a bit too long for STARLOG), a look behind the apes of *Greystoke* with creator Rick Baker and Peter Elliott, the talented primate choreographer who made the apes seem alive (as profiled by British correspondent Adam Pirani), a chat with Louise Jameson, companion to *Doctor Who* (as conducted by veteran correspondent Pat O'Neill) and a complete episode guide to *The Greatest American Hero* (assembled by senior correspondent Bill Cotter).

That's all here, now. And throughout the next year in STARLOG, there will be continuing coverage of these future fantasies: *Amazing Stories. The Twilight Zone. The Clan of the Cave Bear. Brazil. Creator. Silver Bullet. Legend. Enemy Mine. Young Sherlock Holmes. Santa Claus. Labyrinth. Dream Child. Highlander. The Manhattan Project. Poltergeist II. Indiana Jones III. Star Trek IV*. And many others.

So, enjoy THE BEST OF STARLOG. And rendezvous with us again, as we explore this science-fiction universe monthly. . . in the pages of STARLOG.

David McDonnell/Editor

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